

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000298

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHER;  
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION APPROACHES; INTERIOR MINISTER DISCOURAGES  
PROTESTS

Classified By: Ambassador Marguerita D. Ragsdale.  
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Ambassador met March 27 with Minister of Interior, Abdoukader Doualeh Wais, at the Minister's request to discuss election activities. Wais updated the Ambassador on preparations for election day, stating all materials and judicial texts were complete. Training for voting office officials would be held that day for the city of Djibouti and on the 29th for interior districts. Wais expressed interest in meeting the U.S.-sponsored pre-election assessment team comprised of representatives from the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). He stressed that he found it very important that visiting observers receive all the necessary information about the electoral process. He said he hoped the U.S. would send observers for the day of the vote. Wais said the International Organization of Francophone Countries (IOFC) currently had a preliminary evaluation team in Djibouti to decide whether to send observers. He also said observers were expected from the European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and the Arab League (AL). He added that the Government of Djibouti intended to organize the election in a legal, regulated and transparent manner.

2. (C) Wais explained to Ambassador the presidential campaign process, during which incumbent President Guelleh and representatives from the majority's coalition, Union for Presidential Majority (UMP), would be conducting campaign meetings throughout the country over the next two weeks. While Wais was authorized to take part in the campaign, he said he preferred to stick strictly to organization and logistics. He noted that the new party, Union of Reform Partisans (UPR), would also be supporting the government's campaign. As for the opposition, he commented that Djiboutian Party for Democracy (PDD) did not support the boycott, but could not fund its own candidacy. There were two schools of thought within the opposition regarding the boycott, he continued: 1) that the opposition was not confident it could get enough votes to ensure the 5 million DF (28,000 USD) deposit required to be put forward for candidacy -- returned only if the candidate received 5 percent or more of the total vote -- would be returned, and therefore did not want to risk losing that much money and 2) the opposition could get sufficient financial and physical support and should participate.

3. (C) Wais agreed that it was the right of the opposition, or any individual, to participate or not. He advised Ambassador that he saw only three legitimate positions a party boycotting could advocate among the electorate: 1) "We won't participate, so don't vote," 2) "We won't participate, but give your support to X candidate," and 3) "Vote if you like, don't if not." Wais said that any other position could be construed as attempting to impede the political process. He made clear that making trouble on election day or interrupting the process would not be tolerated. He also said that he was very clear on this point in his last two public speeches and that the opposition knew the law.

4. (C) Comment: Post believes Wais's intent in asking for the meeting was to ensure the U.S. understands the government's position regarding the potential for protests by the opposition. Persons protesting on election day could be charged with disturbing the peace or unlawful demonstration. Post cannot find specific laws that prohibit demonstrations on election days, but it may be the tenor and method of protest that will be the determining factors for the government. The Minister of Interior's statements could well be viewed by the opposition as lightly veiled threats aimed at discouraging expressions of discontent on election day. It is too early to tell what portion of the population will side with the opposition and possibly demonstrate. However, it is rumored that the Afar populations - opposition aligned or not - are not supportive of Guelleh due to claims of unfulfilled promises and will likely not turn up in large numbers at the polls. End Comment.  
RAGSDALE